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ABSTRACT

Prepared as an aid to implementing a theatre production course for grades 9 through 12, this guide is designed to enable students who are participating in play production activities to receive recognition and academic credit for their many hours of creative and educational endeavor. The first portion of the guide answers questions frequently asked regarding the nature of the production course, such as how it fits into the theatre scope and sequence and into the rest of the school curriculum, what is the minimum number of hours students must accumulate for credit, and how many credits students can receive for the course. The second portion of the guide offers considerations for implementing such a course, including scheduling, enrollment, assignments, and facilities and supplies. Intended for students more accustomed to television than to live theatre, the third and final section examines questions of theatre etiquette. (HTH)

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THE THEATRE PRODUCTION COURSE

Questions and Considerations

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This publication was developed by TEA staff members in the office of the Deputy Commissioner for Planning, Research, and Curriculum.

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FOREWORD

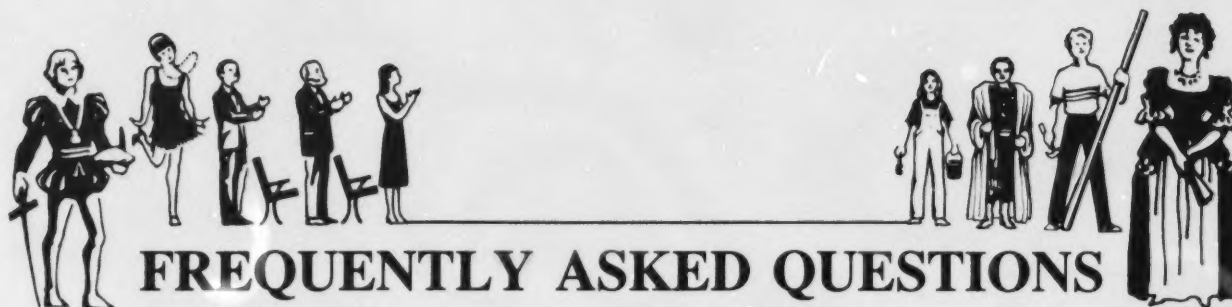
The Theatre Production Course: Questions and Considerations guide has been prepared as an aid to implementing the Theatre Production course for Grades 9-12 which is described in *Theatre Arts Framework for Grades 7-12*, TEA Publication CU0 835 07.*

The Theatre Production course enables students who are actively participating in play production activities to receive recognition and academic credit for their many hours of creative and educational endeavor.

Raymon L. Bynum
Commissioner of Education

*Copies of the *Theatre Arts Framework for Grades 7-12* can be obtained at no charge from: Publications Distribution, Texas Education Agency, 201 East 11th Street, Austin, Texas 78701.

Also available from ERIC, ED 197 407.



FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

• *What is Theatre Production?*

Theatre Production is a cocurricular laboratory for the exploration, development, and synthesis of all the elements of theatre. This course supplements other theatre arts and technical theatre courses that concentrate on theories, information, and techniques, by providing for the integration and implementation of those ideas and skills. Practical experiences in acting and stagecraft are provided through the preparation and public performances of one or more plays.

Components of Theatre Production:

- auditions for actors and technicians
- research and design
- rehearsals
- technical crews
- theatre safety
- public performances
- strike and storage
- critiques and evaluation
- field trips to theatrical productions

• *How does the Theatre Production course fit into the scope and sequence of the K-Grade 12 theatre curriculum?*

The educational theatre curriculum is a sequential and cumulative learning continuum. Theatre Production can be considered as the capstone. The learning processes of perceiving, creating, and evaluating begun in the K-Grade 6 creative drama curriculum expand in scope and complexity through Grade 12. As self-confidence develops, elementary students alternate as participants and observers. In Grades 7 and 8, the theatre arts curriculum begins to focus on interpretation and performance as students develop their communication skills. In Grades 9-12, these processes are refined and utilized in theatrical productions.

• *How does the course relate to the rest of the school curriculum?*

Theatre is a cooperative venture among actors, technicians, and the audience. Performances of plays developed in the Theatre Production course can provide important educational experiences for every student in the school. As audience members, students can learn to receive with sensitivity that which is being communicated to them as they explore values, develop critical skills, and exercise aesthetic judgment. The Theatre Production course is a basic component of the theatre arts program. And it can be an integral part of the school curriculum, providing a laboratory in which theatre students create educational experiences for the entire student body.

- *Is Theatre Production an approved course?*

Yes. Theatre Production is included along with Theatre Arts I-IV and Technical Theatre I-II in the "List of Approved Subjects and Courses, Grades 7-12" in *Principles, Standards, and Procedures for the Accreditation of School Districts*, TEA Publication AD0 824 01.

- *Is any paperwork or correspondence with TEA necessary for implementing the Theatre Production course?*

No. Since this is a TEA-approved course, all you need to do is offer it as you would any other course.

- *Is it true that the course can meet in the late afternoon or evenings?*

Yes. The course was designed primarily to give students credit for their work in play production activities which are usually scheduled outside of regular school hours.

Scheduling appropriate for the successful production of the play(s) will have to be determined locally. The course may meet during a regularly scheduled class period, but the scope of activities will probably require additional time. A school may therefore choose to provide a lengthened class period. The most viable option, however, may be to schedule the course outside of regular school hours. Theatre production activities have traditionally been held in the afternoons and evenings, providing extended work periods and allowing for participation by students unable to enroll in other theatre courses due to schedule conflicts. This situation is not unique. Vocational courses often meet for extended time periods, and competitive athletics often meet after school to enable all interested students to participate.

- *The production of a play normally takes from six to eight weeks. Once the play is over, does the Theatre Production class have to continue to meet?*

The course does not necessarily have to meet every day or for an entire semester, so long as the total instructional time is at least equivalent to a regular semester course. The major requirement is that each student be involved in production activities at least 80 hours in order to receive ½ unit of credit. Rehearsing two to three hours a day for six or so weeks will soon total 80 or more hours. Consequently it is not necessary that the course meet for an entire semester.

"A unit of credit is the equivalent of the study of a subject that is scheduled for a minimum of 160 clock hours, which traditionally is one 55-minute period per day for the school year. A ½ unit of credit is 80 clock hours. This definition is based on the usual operation of schools. Deviations from the usual operation are acceptable for meeting the unit of credit so long as the school makes available the amount of time required to permit the individual to meet the acceptable achievement standards for the course." (*Principles, Standards, and Procedures for the Accreditation of School Districts*, TEA Publication AD0 824 01, §97.114(d)).

- *What happens if some students haven't been involved in production activities for the minimum 80 hours at the close of a production?*

This is a definite possibility since actors in major roles or crew heads would be putting in much more time than, say, actors in minor roles. Probably the best solution is to give such students an "incomplete" until they have accumulated the 80 hours. This might mean that such students would participate in two or more productions before earning

a ½ unit of credit. Or, following the close of a production, such students might work on mini-productions or stagecraft projects. Remember, too, that field trips to theatrical productions are an important and valid component of the course.

- *How many credits can students receive for Theatre Production?*

One-half to four units of credit. Completion of two semesters of production work (160 hours) constitutes Theatre Production I, the next two semesters comprise Theatre Production II, the fifth and sixth semesters constitute Theatre Production III, and the seventh and eighth semesters comprise Theatre Production IV.

- *Can students take Theatre Production simultaneously with other theatre courses, or are they limited to only one theatre course at a time?*

There is no such limitation. Similarly, students can take two English courses the same semester, or band and jazz band concurrently. It is quite probable that students enrolled in any of the Theatre Arts I-IV courses and/or the Technical Theatre I-II courses would also be enrolled in Theatre Production which would serve as a laboratory for implementing the theories, information, and techniques being studied in the other courses. And since the Theatre Production course would probably be meeting outside of regular school hours, the students would not be restricted from taking other elective courses.

- *But if students take these theatre courses simultaneously, isn't it possible that they can accumulate enough credits to graduate early?*

Possibly, but limiting the number of theatre courses will not stop students from graduating early if that is what they want to do. In any case, it would seem that such a decision should rest with the individual. Besides, students must first satisfy graduation requirements by taking all the required subjects. One other point: the excitement and stimulation of participating in Theatre Production may provide students with the motivation for staying in school.

- *Is there a prerequisite for the course?*

No. The Texas Education Agency recommends that the course be open to all interested students in Grades 9-12, with student assignment to be determined by the director. If local conditions warrant it, however, a school district may require a prerequisite.

- *Should there be a maximum enrollment limitation for the course?*

This is a local decision. Since Theatre Production is an elective course, it would seem that it should be open to all interested students. This might require doing large-cast shows, or several small-cast shows. An open-door policy is necessary if the theatre program is to be active and to grow. If students are turned away, it is quite probable they may not return.

- *What is the best enrollment procedure for the course?*

This must be a local decision. Many schools, especially those with computer systems, pre-enroll several weeks or even months before the semester begins. The advantage of this method for the Theatre Production course is that the enrollment is known in advance. Plays can then be selected to fit the number and needs of the students. However, the preferable system would probably be to hold auditions for a specific play immediately before rehearsals were scheduled to begin. This would accommodate students' changing interests and schedules. Once a play was cast and crewed, the company list, or class role, could then be submitted to the records department.

- *Since Theatre Production is a course, does every student have to be "in class" every day of the rehearsal schedule?*

Definitely not. This is a laboratory course, and it is not always practical for every student to be actively involved at every moment. For example, in a vocational lab there is a limited amount of equipment. While students can learn by watching others weld or operate a saw, they must also have their turn at hands-on involvement. In a play production, students can learn by watching a rehearsal or a demonstration of how to build a flat, but they must also actively participate. Limitations of time, space, and facilities will necessitate students' working on various projects at different times. The worst situation possible would be to require every student to be present all the time, for this could result in a waste of time and energy and could lead to boredom, loss of interest, and even discipline problems.

- *Do students in Theatre Production have to be given a grade?*

Yes, since it is a course. Grading procedures would be similar to other theatre courses where subjective decisions must be made. Rather than the traditional "A-B-C" method, consider the possibility of a pass-fail system: an "A" if students meet the requirements, or an "F" (or perhaps simply no credit) if they do not.

- *How many productions must be presented each semester?*

The minimum is one; the maximum would depend upon student enrollment and interest. Regardless of the number of productions, it should be remembered that theatre is a cooperative venture among actors, technicians, and the audience. Viewing and reacting to theatrical performances can assist students in becoming discriminating and appreciative consumers. Therefore, multiple performances of each production should be offered for students in the district as well as for the community, dependent upon the nature of the material being produced.

- *Can Theatre Production credit be given for the UIL contest one-act play?*

Since the activities involved in the production of the one-act play for the University Interscholastic League contest are the same as for any play production, it is perfectly acceptable to use the UIL one-act play production to satisfy the requirements for the Theatre Production course.

- *Why should students working on a play after school be given academic credit when other extracurricular activities do not provide credit?*

The Texas Education Agency has recognized that Theatre Production is not an extracurricular activity but rather an academic cocurricular laboratory.

Students engaged in the multitude of activities that comprise a play production are actively developing personal knowledge, skills, and competence and learning behavior patterns that will make them responsible members of society. (See pages 3-5 of the *Theatre Arts Framework for Grades 7-12*.)

Each of the various subjects in the school curriculum is unique, serving the varied interests and needs of individual students. What is appropriate for one course may be totally inappropriate for another. Rather than compare apples and oranges, it would be more constructive to provide the structure, facilities, and support necessary for developing each subject to its full potential to best serve the needs of all the students.

- *Should a teacher be compensated for teaching Theatre Production?*

In the course of producing a play, either as an extracurricular activity or within the framework of the cocurricular Theatre Production laboratory, the director functions as a teacher and should be compensated. If the Theatre Production course is taught outside of regular school hours, the teacher may be assigned a second release/conference period. The class, though scheduled later in the day, thus becomes part of the teacher's class load. Or, if a teacher has a full teaching load, a stipend may be provided for teaching Theatre Production as an additional course. Similar practices are employed for athletics.

- *Should a budget be provided for the Theatre Production course?*

In the old movie musicals, Andy Hardy, Polly Benedict, and the gang would get together in a barn and, in a matter of days, conjure forth a spectacular Broadway production. While this makes for a nice romantic story, it is a fiction somewhat akin to alchemy. It is difficult to make something out of nothing. Hence the need for adequate budgets and workable and accessible facilities.

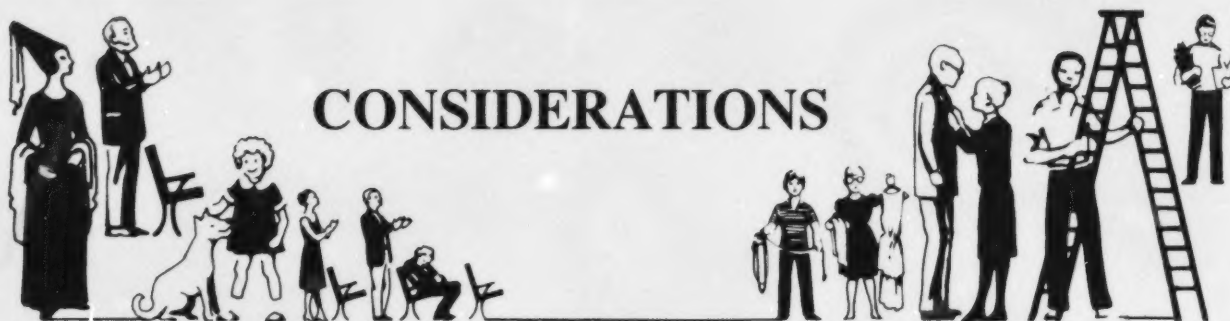
Often, however, theatre students must contend with raising money to pay for their laboratory supplies: lumber, paint, lamps, fabric, makeup, scripts, etc. Considerable time, effort, and worry are thus expended on basic economic survival. If Theatre Production is to be a viable educational laboratory, preparation and performance facilities and funding must be provided so that the students' creative energies can be devoted to their intellectual and artistic development.

- *If we currently do not offer any theatre courses, can we still offer Theatre Production?*

Yes. While it would be better for students to have the background and techniques taught in Theatre Arts I-IV and Technical Theatre I-II, it is possible, and frequently common, for students to participate in play production activities without this experience. In such cases, basic instruction must be combined with application, resulting in sort of on-the-job training.

If you produce a one-act play for the UIL competition, you are essentially already offering the Theatre Production course. All you need to do is add the course title and record the students' credits.

Once the Theatre Production course is established, it may provide the impetus for building a more comprehensive theatre program.



Each school will need to design the Theatre Production course to meet local needs. Decisions will have to be made concerning the following:

SCHEDULING

- How many productions will be presented each semester?
- If there is more than one production a semester, will the same students be involved, or will the student enrollment change? If there is a change in enrollment, how will the units of credit be distributed?
- If a production begins late in the fall semester and extends into the spring semester, how will this affect enrollment and credit distribution?
- Will the course meet during regular school hours or outside of school hours? For how long?
- How will rehearsals and crews be scheduled to ensure that each student is actively involved in production activities for the required minimum of 80 hours a semester?
- How many performances of each production will be given for the public? For the school? For other schools?

ENROLLMENT

- There are no prerequisites for Theatre Production stipulated by TEA. Will there be any local prerequisites?
- Will students be pre-enrolled, or will the class roster be compiled after a forthcoming play has been announced and auditions held?
- Will all students who pre-enroll or audition be utilized in the production company, or will there be a maximum enrollment limitation?
- How will the enrollment procedure affect the guidance and student records offices?
- How will the enrollment procedure affect script selection?

STUDENT ASSIGNMENTS

- How will the need to maintain production standards of the highest quality be reconciled with the need to provide inexperienced students with a diversity of learning opportunities?
- What criteria will be used for casting and technical assignments?
- Will students who only want to act be crewed if not cast?
- Will students who only want to work as technicians be required to audition for roles?
- Will students be assigned as crew heads? If so, what will be the criteria for assignment and the extent of their authority?

GRADING

- What will be the grading criteria?
- How will tardiness and absences be handled?
- What happens if a student drops out prior to performance?

FACILITIES AND SUPPLIES

- What production facilities are available and how will they be utilized?
- Is the theatre arts program guaranteed uninterrupted access to the performance facility prior to and during the run? For how long? (The Texas Educational Theatre Association recommends a minimum of two weeks prior to the performances.)
- Is a production budget provided? How much?
- What are admission charges, and how is this revenue used?
- Is a videotape system available for rehearsals?

AUDIENCE PREPARATION

- Will any steps be taken to teach the student body proper audience etiquette?
- Will background information be provided to enhance the educational benefits of the performances?

CRITIQUES AND EVALUATION

- How will the performers and technicians evaluate their production experiences?
- How will the audience evaluate their theatrical experience?

STRIKE AND STORAGE

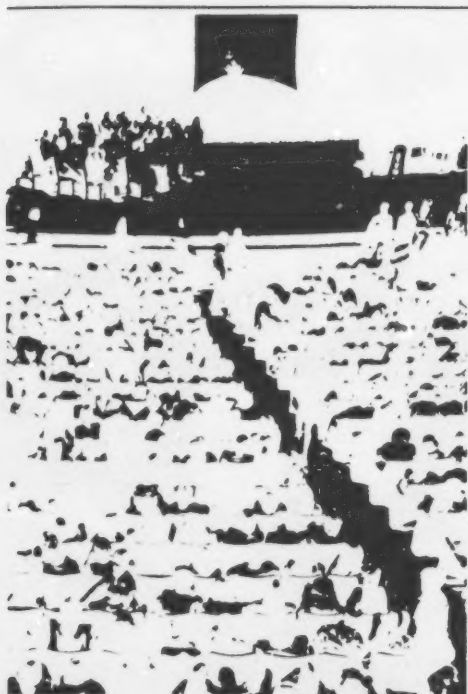
- How will strike and storage maintenance be handled?

ACCESSIBILITY

- How will acting and technical assignments be made accessible to handicapped students?
- How will performances be made accessible to handicapped audience members?

INTERGENERATIONAL EDUCATION

- How will various age groups be involved in the production activities: elementary students? junior high students? general public? senior citizens?



AUDIENCE ETIQUETTE

With any form of communication, cooperation is essential for a productive dialogue. There are ground rules that must be observed lest the exchange degenerate into chaos. Theatre is such a dialogue carried on between actors and technicians and the audience. And the prerequisite for effective theatrical experiences is an understanding and observance of audience etiquette.

A large percentage of today's students have seldom, if ever, attended a live theatrical performance. They have been desensitized by constant exposure to television which reinforces passivity, tolerates inattention, and reduces attention spans to commercially encapsulated segments. Thus conditioned, it is not surprising that novice audience members visit with each other during a performance, shout derogatory comments at the performers, make frequent trips to the water fountain, fail to applaud the efforts of the company, and head for the exit the instant the dramatic outcome becomes obvious. Such behavior is customary for television viewing, and irritatingly common at the cinemas. But it is inexcusable at a live performance.

The solution in some schools has been to avoid the problem. Students cannot misbehave at assemblies and cultural activities if they aren't assembled to begin with. Nor can they learn how to behave. A more positive approach is to educate students as to what constitutes acceptable audience etiquette, and then to provide multiple opportunities for them to responsibly experience live performances. The responsibility for teaching and maintaining audience etiquette belongs not to just the theatre director but rather must be assumed by the entire faculty and administration.

The Theatre Production course can be an integral part of the school curriculum, providing a laboratory in which theatre students create educational experiences for the entire student body. Consider the following topics as a means toward achieving audience etiquette and expanding the benefits of theatrical productions.

- What is expected of the ideal audience member by performers and technicians? By teachers? By fellow audience members?
- What expectancies does the audience have of a theatrical production?
- List examples of inappropriate audience behavior. What are possible reasons for such behavior? What are possible solutions?
- What methods would be most effective in teaching audience etiquette?

- If an audience member(s) behaves disruptively during a performance, what action should be taken? With what consequence?
- What can be done to better prepare an audience for a particular production?
- If study guides are distributed for a particular production, what material should be included? In what format? How can the guide be utilized most effectively?
- Following a performance, how can audience members most effectively evaluate their theatrical experience?
- How can the audience's reaction and critical evaluations be best communicated to the production company?
- How can a forum between company members and audience members be organized for school performances? For public performances?

• *"Having assimilated the author's creation, the actor is left alone, face to face with the spectator; and from the friction between these two unadulterated elements, the actor's creativity and the spectator's imagination, a clear flame is kindled."*

—Vsevolod Meyerhold

• *"You need three things in the theatre: the play, the actors, and the audience; and each must give something."*

—Kenneth Kaigh

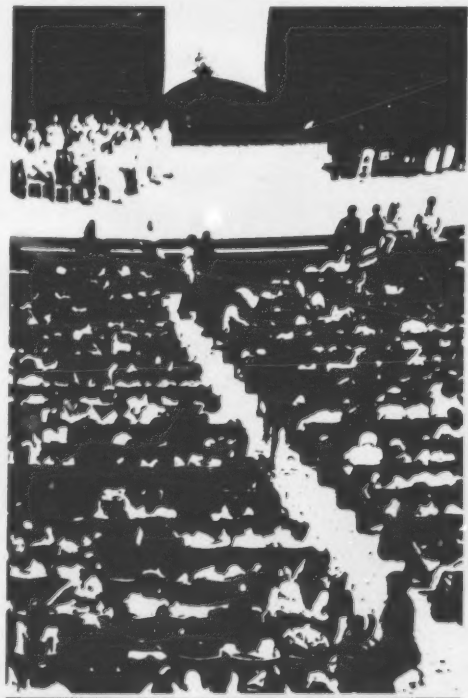
• *"One's roused by this, another finds that fit. Each loves the play for what he brings to it."*

—Johann Wolfgang von Goethe

• *"To have great poets, there must be great audiences, too."*

—Walt Whitman

• *The word "theatre" derive from the Greek "theatron": a seeing place where one comes to possess a new knowledge.*



COMPLIANCE STATEMENT

TITLE VI, CIVIL RIGHTS ACT OF 1964; THE MODIFIED COURT ORDER, CIVIL ACTION 5281, FEDERAL DISTRICT COURT, EASTERN DISTRICT OF TEXAS, TYLER DIVISION

Reviews of local education agencies pertaining to compliance with Title VI Civil Rights Act of 1964 and with specific requirements of the Modified Court Order, Civil Action No. 5281, Federal District Court, Eastern District of Texas, Tyler Division are conducted periodically by staff representatives of the Texas Education Agency. These reviews cover at least the following policies and practices:

- (1) acceptance policies on student transfers from other school districts;
- (2) operation of school bus routes or runs on a non-segregated basis;
- (3) nondiscrimination in extracurricular activities and the use of school facilities;
- (4) nondiscriminatory practices in the hiring, assigning, promoting, paying, demoting, reassigning, or dismissing of faculty and staff members who work with children;
- (5) enrollment and assignment of students without discrimination on the basis of race, color, or national origin;
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- (7) evidence of published procedures for hearing complaints and grievances.

In addition to conducting reviews, the Texas Education Agency staff representatives check complaints of discrimination made by a citizen or citizens residing in a school district where it is alleged discriminatory practices have occurred or are occurring.

Where a violation of Title VI of the Civil Rights Act is found, the findings are reported to the Office for Civil Rights, Department of Health, Education and Welfare.

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TITLE VII, CIVIL RIGHTS ACT OF 1964; EXECUTIVE ORDERS 11246 AND 11375; TITLE IX, 1973 EDUCATION AMENDMENTS; REHABILITATION ACT OF 1973 AS AMENDED; 1974 AMENDMENTS TO THE WAGE-HOUR LAW EXPANDING THE AGE DISCRIMINATION IN EMPLOYMENT ACT OF 1967; AND VIETNAM ERA VETERANS READJUSTMENT ASSISTANCE ACT OF 1972 AS AMENDED IN 1974.

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